



News Release

For Immediate Release:
Wednesday, August 3, 2005

West Nile Virus Detected Earlier Throughout Utah

Everyone in Utah Should Take Precautions Now

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Utah public health officials report West Nile virus (WNV) has now been detected in several counties throughout Utah. During the past week, WNV was found in four separate counties. Laboratory reports show an increase in WNV activity for the second consecutive week. The virus was detected about one week earlier this year than in 2004.

Detected WNV activity for this past week includes:

- Salt Lake County - one mosquito pool
- Utah County – four mosquito pools
- Duchesne County – one mosquito pool, two sentinel chickens and one dead bird
- Uintah County – one dead bird and two sentinel chickens

No human WNV cases have been found in Utah so far this year. “Our experience with WNV in past years indicates that once established, it can spread rapidly,” says Dr. Robert Rolfs, state epidemiologist, Utah Department of Health (UDOH). “We recommend that all Utahns take the simple steps to protect themselves from the virus.”

Preventing mosquito bites is the best way to avoid getting WNV. Utahns can protect themselves from mosquito bites by:

- Using mosquito repellents that contain DEET or Picaridin (especially from dusk to dawn).
- Wearing long-sleeve shirts and long pants while outdoors.
- Getting rid of standing water; this is where mosquitoes may live.

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Most people who are infected with WNV do not show any symptoms. About one in every five have flu-like symptoms with fever, muscle aches, and possibly a rash. While those individuals recover, the illness can be prolonged. About one in 150 develop more severe illness affecting the brain and spinal cord. They may have headache, paralysis, and stiff neck, and may suffer long-lasting or permanent disability. The risk of severe illness increases with age, but there is no age group that isn't at risk of illness.

Staff from the Utah Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture and Food, along with local health departments, local mosquito abatement districts, and the Division of Wildlife Resources are all collaborating to track and monitor WNV in Utah. Since March 2005, local mosquito abatement districts have been using all their resources to reduce the number of mosquitoes that can spread the disease. They will continue these efforts throughout the 2005 mosquito season.

For more information, call your local health department or the Health Resource Line at 1-888-222-2542. For up-to-date information on WNV in Utah, please visit www.health.utah.gov/wnv.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.